

Feb. 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Support  
SUBJECT : Agency-Wide Records Management Survey  
REFERENCE : DDS Memorandum 65-1607, dated 7 April 1965

STAT 1. At your request (see reference) this office recently completed a comprehensive survey (Headquarters) of the records management (RM) function in the Agency. The survey covered the Office of the Director, the four Directorates, the Central Records Administration Staff, and the Agency Records Center  Because of the complex and far-reaching nature of the RM function in the Agency, the survey limited its fact finding to the interview of key personnel involved in this activity. In all, about 75 such persons in grades GS-7 to GS-15 were interviewed. With most of these people the RM function is only a part-time endeavor.

2. Our summary findings and recommendations appear on page of this report. In some respects these will duplicate points already made in the five separate reports that have been prepared to cover our inquiry in each of the four Directorates and the Records Administration Staff. Because this report is based almost exclusively on personnel

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interviews (there was no inspection of files or analysis of specific records handling systems), our findings and recommendations are tentative.

General Observations

3. In the U.S. Government community CIA is considered a leader in the RM field. This distinction is based on positive RM achievements, particularly during the last 10 years, when the Agency first established, then gradually improved its RM system so that today this system functions fairly effectively, despite certain obvious flaws. In this report we address ourselves primarily to these flaws, notwithstanding the fact that most of them stem from well known causal factors such as the low level of Agency interest in RM, the low working priority accorded to this function, lack of personnel and the like.

4. The greatest single Agency failure with respect to the RM function stems from the tendency to regard this activity largely as an exercise on paper volume control. On this false notion have been built a number of other erroneous impressions such as the belief that the records function is a routine clerical task to be handled by low level clerical personnel; that the function rates low priority as against other Agency business; that it requires no special planning or direction; and that the problem in any case is not of

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major concern to operating officials. In our inspection we found a general lack of understanding among top level officials about the nature of records and their value in the Agency's working scheme. While most operating officials and senior officers in the Agency seem to profess an interest in good records, few translate this attitude into positive courses of action on which effective records systems can be built. The lack of real interest in good records on the part of the Agency's top management coupled with its failure to acknowledge the importance of the records function itself is probably our most significant inspection finding. We consider this finding important because it lies at the root of all records management problems. The general apathy and disinterest in records, which prevails in virtually every Agency component, becomes more and more pronounced as one ascends the managerial ladder.

5. Our next important finding has to do with the fundamental defect in the Agency's organization of the records management function. As presently constituted, this function is decentralized; that is, each Directorate and Office is itself responsible for the conduct of its own RM activity. This decentralization was accomplished

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in 1961 when the Agency's former Management Staff was dissolved and the Records Administration Staff (RAS) created in the Deputy Directorate of Support. The defect in this new organizational arrangement is discussed in Part of this report which deals specifically with the present Records Administration Staff (RAS). The decentralization action is formalized in HR [ ] of 15 April 1964 (Revised) which, despite certain manifest weaknesses, constitutes the only existing mandate for the Agency's widespread and very costly RM activities. HR [ ] provides no specific guidelines for the decentralized RM organization and as a result each Directorate has solved the problem in its own way, either by default or some form of loose RM organization that is neither orthodox nor effective. As an example, DDP runs its RM program out of its [ ] even though its records keeping function is and will continue to be primarily a manual operation. Needless to say, the RM function in DDP is very much machine oriented. Another flaw in the DDP setup is that the Agency's central Records Administration Staff has little to do with DDP's RM activity ostensibly because of the security problem. The contact is now largely confined to forms and equipment problems. In DDI, DDS and DD/S&T, the responsibility for

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the RM function has been decentralized to the point where it usually devolves on the individual components, some of which have virtual autonomy in the conduct of this activity. The effectiveness of the individual RM programs in these components varies in accordance with the abilities and degree of RM interest of the person in charge. In many of these components the GS grade and experience level of the RM officers is low. In others the general level of interest in RM is quite shallow, notably on the supervisory level. In almost every component, the records management officer (or records administration officer) has collateral duties, some of which have nothing to do with records.

6. We also found that the RM regulatory structure throughout the Agency is either weak or non-existent. As already stated, HR ☐ constitutes the basic Agency mandate for this activity. This regulation is too broadly phrased to provide any effective guidelines for RM work in the individual components. As an example, HR ☐ does not define either the status or the functions of the RAS. It fails to define the standing of RAS in terms of its staff or command responsibilities and thus leaves this important question in doubt. As a result the RAS staff has no compulsive power and its advice and counsel is often ignored. In most cases RAS has to "sell" its services.

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Some Agency components have translated the most important provisions of IIR [ ] into an internal regulatory issuance which redefines the RM program in terms of the component itself and establishes some guidelines for its general conduct. This type of internal interpretation, however, has only been accomplished in a few of the components. Also, where it has been done, the interpretation is not uniform and conspicuous lacunae are evident. In the Office of Personnel, for example, an internal regulation (OPM 70-1-1, dated 19 March 1965) defines RM activity in terms of four major functions: records maintenance, records disposition, vital records administration and forms administration. The regulation fails to pay heed to the full spectrum of RM activities as outlined in HR [ ] and thus by implication declares certain significant RM functions as null and void.

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7. The weak regulatory structure plus the low priority generally ascribed to the Agency RM function is reflected in the personnel organization that now surrounds this activity. In this respect three significant weaknesses are evident: the disparity in the grade level of RM officers throughout the Agency in comparison with their working responsibilities; the dilution of the RM effort with other working assignments, some of which have higher priority; the assignment of the RM function to clerical personnel

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on the lowest Agency level, or to personnel with inadequate training or interest in the function; the failure to establish satisfactory inducements (such as an RM career structure) to RM officers with the result that most RM specialists find themselves low on the promotion ladder with little other career prospect.

Recommendations

8. To correct the defects cited above several organizational and RM policy changes should be made and to this end

It is recommended that

(a) The Records Management function in the Agency be revitalized and interest in the program stimulated, especially on top management levels;

(b) Senior operating and administrative officials be made more acutely aware of the importance of the RM function and the need for their active participation.

(c) The Records Management function be redefined for the whole Agency, not only in terms of the broad spectrum of activity that it entails, but also with respect to practical and reasonably attainable goals. This redefinition should be made on the highest possible Agency level in order to break through the present inertia and lack of interest that characterizes some aspects of the present RM endeavor.

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(d) The records management function be reorganized as a pyramidal structure with the Records Administration Staff transferred from its present anomalous position in the Deputy Directorate for Support to the Office of the Director. In this organizational structure the Chief of the Records Administration Staff would be the de facto records authority for the Agency. This senior Records Administration Officer would be represented in each of the four directorates [ ] by a senior Records Management Officer who in turn will be the officially appointed RMO for that component. The relationship between the Records Administration Officer in the Office of the Director and the senior RMO's in the individual directorates will have a staff character. Jurisdiction over the Agency's Records Center [ ] also will be transferred to the Office of the Director with the Agency's senior Records Administration Officer continuing in charge of this installation.

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(e) The regulatory structure governing the records management function in the Agency be revamped. This should begin with a revision of HR [ ] which is now obsolete. The revised HR [ ] should be used as a basis for individual internal instructions which will formalize the establishment of the program, define its goals, fix responsibility, establish working priorities, and provide for continuity and

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change in accordance with current and future developments and working priorities.

(f) The personnel structure in the Agency's RM activity be surveyed to determine whether the complement is too large or too small for the job. The qualifications of individual RM officers should likewise be re-examined with a view to achieving the best possible staffing for the job. Present RM officers with little ability or interest in RM work should be given other assignments. Employees who are already performing well or who demonstrate good prospect for RM work should be carefully screened and where necessary, further trained for their jobs.

(g) The possibility of establishing a career program for RM personnel should be carefully studied.

9. None of the observations or recommendations above have addressed themselves specifically to the problem of automatic data processing (ADP) in the Agency. We have avoided this issue in our survey because it involves many complex records handling (also storage and disposition) considerations that are outside our competence. It should be underlined, however, that ADP impinges directly on virtually every records management problem in the Agency. In many components the existence of ADP systems side by side with hard copy records has created a variety of problems owing to duplication of records on a wide scale. When and to what extent hard copy records will yield to ADP files

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and thus permit destruction of the former is still a question. Some DDP area divisions see this duplication of records as a standing dilemma for which there is no ready solution. The Agency's top level direction will have to cope with this growing problem in the very near future.

Records Management - DD/S&T

Introduction

1. The Directorate for Science and Technology (DD/S&T) is a relatively new organization still saddled with many of the problems incident to change. DD/S&T is also in a state of rapid expansion. This is emphatically reflected in the enormous recent increase in the volume of its records. In mid-1964 the total records holdings of DD/S&T was <sup>7,120</sup>5,986 cubic feet. On 30 June 1965 these holdings increased to <sup>7,925</sup>~~6,979~~ cubic feet and the trend is toward further increases. One factor in this records volume increase is the expansion of the DD/S&T function and addition of several new offices. During the past year the organizational additions have included the Office of Computer Services (OCS) and the Office of Special Projects (OSP). Both of these new components are creators of a large volume of paper. Because of its growth problems and preoccupation with current operations, DD/S&T has not yet really come to grips either with its increasing paper volume problem or other RM issues as well.

Organization and Functions

2. There are four records management officers in DD/S&T, one each for OSI, OSA and OCS and one with combined responsibility for OEL, ORO, OEL and FMSAC. The grade

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structure of these officers ranges from GS-8 to GS-12. Only the OSI officer can be considered a full-time records management officer and in this component the records situation is exceptionally good. By contrast, in OCS the RM responsibility is vested in a GS-12 officer who holds the RM title but spends no time on pure RM functions. Thus, for all practical intents, OCS has no records management officer.

3. In terms of job responsibility all officers in DD/S&T regard the Chief of Support of their individual components as their immediate supervisor. Actually little RM guidance issues from this supervisory arrangement. In fact, all RM officers in DD/S&T function fairly autonomously. Their more active RM relationship is with the Agency's central Records Administration Office, but this relationship is largely restricted to periodic advice and counsel. RAS provides general guidance to these officers on records storage, retirement and disposition problems, and on forms management and vital materials. While such assistance is constructive and usually productive, it is very informal and follows no systematic pattern. The services of RAS, although available to each DD/S&T component for the asking, still must be "sold." OCS, for example, has yet to take advantage of these services even though approached several times by RAS for this purpose.

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Because of its weak organizational position RAS is unable easily to inject itself into this or any other records management situation, even if its expertise and general counseling services are badly needed.

4. Like all Agency components, for RM purposes DD/S&T falls within the regulatory purview of HR [ ] dated 15 April 1964 (Revised). The flaws in this document, which are dealt with in another report, are largely attributable to obsolescence and the fact that the document prescribes only a general pattern of RM organization and responsibility. The main provision of HR [ ] insofar as DD/S&T is concerned, is its prescription for a decentralized RM function in all parts of the Agency. Thus DD/S&T has the option of running its RM organization according to its own likes and needs. In this respect DD/S&T has further pushed decentralization so that the four existing RM officers (one of whom is inactive in the RM field), run the program on the basis of responsibilities and guidelines established by DD/S&T himself. These officers however obtain no working guidance within DD/S&T. Nor do they have the benefit of any internal regulatory issuance which would expand on HR [ ] and thus give their RM work better dimension. They maintain only occasional contact with each other and there is little

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exchange of ideas. While these officers do obtain assistance from the Records Administration Staff, this is usually on an ad hoc basis and only when there are special problems.

5. The consensus among RM officers in DD/S&T is that there are few senior officers in the Directorate who really understand the RM function, or pay any heed to it. The feeling is that these supervisors see RM work merely as a paper volume control activity which needs attention only when the space allotted to records (files) is in short supply. These RM officers contend that supervisors pay scant attention to such basic RM considerations as the Vital Materials program and correspondence and reports management. The latter problem is of particular concern to DD/S&T because it produces a large volume of printed documents. The paper storage and disposition problems that result from this reports production affects not only the Agency but the entire intelligence community where these reports are distributed on a high volume basis.

6. The direction of DD/S&T is undoubtedly well aware of its shortcomings in the field of records management. They know, too, that most of these defects can be explained in terms of organizational growth, higher working priorities, lack of personnel, and other related problems which now face

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virtually every operating component in the Agency. It would be unreasonable in this report to disregard these problems or blindly to assert a higher priority for RM work. We believe it would serve a better purpose merely to catalogue in terms of specific recommendations certain RM weaknesses in DD/S&T which are fairly basic and, in our opinion, correctible with a minimum of effort.

Recommendations

It is recommended that

The Deputy Director for Science and Technology

(a) Revitalize the records management (RM) function by impressing on his Office heads, Division Chiefs and other senior officers the importance of the RM effort to their work, by pointing out the present flaws and shortcomings, and by organizing a long range plan of action which would strengthen the RM organization and eliminate its most glaring defects.

(b) Formally define the RM function in DD/S&T in keeping with HR ☐ with particular emphasis on establishing the bounds of this activity, identifying its goals in terms of attainable objectives, establishing responsibility for the effort on the DD/S&T level first and the individual Office level next.

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(c) Revamp the RM organization so that incumbent RM officers are the most competent personnel available, that they are sufficiently trained for their assignments, and that they obtain the necessary high level support to do their jobs effectively.

(d) Improve the RM relationship with other Agency components, particularly with the Records Administration Staff, for purposes of achieving a cross-fertilization of ideas and to take advantage of the qualified guidance and direction that is readily available in this highly specialized field.

(e) Take appropriate steps to expand the RM knowledge of key personnel in DD/S&T in order to broaden their RM perspectives and to help dispel erroneous impressions about the value of this activity and its place in the Agency working scheme.